

Professional Standards Council Annual Report - June, 2000

Introduction

The Professional Standards Council (PSC) was created by 1997 Wisconsin Act 298 (Appendix A) that was originally introduced as 1997 Senate Bill 364 by the Joint Legislative Council upon recommendation of the Special Committee on Teacher Preparation, Licensure and Regulation. Act 298 created the PSC in the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), set the membership at 19 members, and provided regulations for the nomination and appointment of members by the State Superintendent. The Act included the duties and responsibilities of the council members and required that the State Senate confirm appointments. The impetus for the creation of this council was to provide a statutory mechanism to review, propose or revise teacher preparation policies and to assist the State Superintendent in improving teacher preparation, licensure and regulation.

Seventeen of the 19 members are required to be selected by the State Superintendent from nominations provided by various professional associations or institutions. The two members who do not need to be nominated by an outside group are the parent representative and the student member.

The date of publication of Act 298 was June 30, 1998, and on July 10, 1998 State Superintendent John Benson sent individual letters to the seven organizations named as sources of nominees requesting names for potential members. Nominations from organizations were finalized and appointments were completed in January of 1999. The first meeting of the PSC was scheduled for and held on February 16, 1999. Officers were selected at this meeting and Bill Hartje, a teacher from Evansville, was elected to be the first Chair of the new Professional Standards Council for Teachers.

In his capacity as chair, Mr. Hartje was invited to address an education and business group in Milwaukee. His remarks to that assemblage summarize the work of the PSC and the view for the future work of the PSC. Those remarks follow.

Some people may wonder why the drive for new preparation and licensing standards for educators is even necessary. Actually there are several reasons for such a major revamping of what has been done in the past.

First, no matter how well we are doing in education, we owe it to the young people of this state to strive to be better. Complacency is a prescription for falling behind. The public and educators should demand no less.

In addition, educators need to model the philosophy of lifelong learning. The various aspects of working with young people are of sufficient complexity that one never feels, or never should feel, that growth is complete. The new system of licensure gives teachers both more responsibility and more control over their professional development throughout their entire careers.

New and compelling research does suggest that systemic changes can be made which will improve educational practice. Much has been learned about how people learn, about how instruction and assessment can be improved, and about strategies for dealing with all children, for example.

Finally, the move to a new system of licensure for educators mirrors the direction that the state has been heading in working with students themselves. In recent years, Wisconsin has developed the Model Academic Standards for our students. The philosophical base for this change is a shift to what we call "performance standards".

In the past, schools were told what courses students should be required to take. Elementary schools were told how much time to the minutes per year that they needed in instruction of math, language arts, and so on. At the secondary level, schools added their own individual requirements to those from the state and determined the number of credits for graduation. This was the "input model". Essentially, if this amount of time is put in, then we will assume these results would be achieved.

The performance standards for students, however, use an "outcome model". This describes expectations about what students should know and be able to do then leaves how this is accomplished to the schools to develop. Students are no longer simply required to have four credits of English, rather they are expected to be able to demonstrate their ability to perform. This same shift is taking place in the preparation of teachers.

In the old system of teacher preparation, colleges and universities were told what courses they were to have prospective teachers take in their training -- a course in classroom management, another in curriculum design, so on. Anyone having passing grades in those courses and successfully completing a student teaching experience was given certification to teach - a typical input model.

Now the state of Wisconsin has gone to 10 Standards, which describe what a good teacher is and does. These are based on both research and common sense about good teaching. Think about what characteristics a good teacher should have. These are now reflected in the Wisconsin Teacher Standards (Addendum A).

Notice how most people's ideas correspond with the Standards being set for educators. Teachers should know their subjects well; they should know how people learn; they should know how to structure and present information, and how to assess whether that information is learned; they should be able to communicate well, and they should be able to establish good relationships with others.

Instead of being told what courses to teach, colleges and universities are now being told what standards exist for good teachers. The higher education institutions should then set up and evaluate systems to train people who will be able to demonstrate these skills to an acceptable level. The Department of Public Instruction will monitor how they set up their basic programs, but higher education will also have the flexibility to train people in different ways provided the students can demonstrate the needed level of competence on the Wisconsin Standards.

In the future, higher expectations for entry into schools of education will also be part of the rules. Those wanting to enter education programs will have to pass a rigorous subject matter exam to be accepted.

New teachers can only learn so much in their training through higher education. Where in the past people simply "became a teacher", they will now enter the profession as "initial educators", the first stage of licensure. Upon being hired by a district, new teachers will be assigned a mentor, an experienced colleague to help guide them into the profession.

As with all of the changes in the new rules, this is backed by research on best practices in improving education. Far too many beginning teachers are lost in those first few years of teaching. In some cases they simply realize that teaching is not for them, but frequently people who might otherwise become good teachers are left to sink or swim, and too many sink. Nationally, more than one-fifth of all those who begin teaching leave in the first five years. This investment in helping people in the early stages of their careers will pay off in big ways for education.

Initial educators will also set up personal professional growth plans for their beginning years. These would of course be related to continued growth in the Wisconsin Standards. An initial educator would work with a team consisting of a peer, an administrator, and a representative from higher education to develop and validate this plan.

After not less than two years and not more than five years, the team would recommend the teacher for a "professional educator" license upon successful completion of the plan. This would be a renewable five-year license. In the past, an experienced teacher picked up six graduate credits or accumulated 180 Equivalency Clock Hours (ECH) from workshops to renew their licenses, an input model. Now the professional educator would continue to develop a professional growth plan to meet personal, school and district needs.

Teams of peers, who would work with these teachers to promote their growth in the Wisconsin Standards, would review these plans. Evidence of improvement would consist of a portfolio of work documenting growth in several areas. Many options are given for what would constitute acceptable documentation. Graduate credits and conferences may still be used, for example, but other methods will also apply.

One purpose of this system at all levels is to address Standard 9, the teacher as a reflective practitioner. Central to the measures of success for both prospective teachers and those renewing their licenses in the future, for example, will be the emphasis on monitoring student achievement. Whether a lesson is successful or not, the reflective educator investigates why. How could the quality of the instruction improve, the assessment, was anything special going on with the student(s) on that day?

Teachers may continue to renew their licenses as professional educators throughout their careers. Some may wish to add another stage - the master educator level. To be eligible for this stage, a teacher must have a Master's degree. At the present time, the only method to attain this level is through certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). This

group sets the standards and assesses and certifies candidates through a series of reflective tasks. Documentation would include lesson plans, student work samples, videotaping of classes, and so on. To date, Wisconsin has ten nationally certified "master educators" out of almost 3,000 nationally.

Note that all of these stages encourage teachers to examine their professional practices and confer and validate their work with others. Education students work with higher education instructors and supervising teachers to develop their proficiency in the Wisconsin Standards for Teachers. Initial educators continue to do this with district teams. Professional educators work with peers, and master educators work through the National Board. The prevailing concept here is one of seamless growth, always reflecting the ideals of the Wisconsin Standards.

Many details of how these new rules will work need to be developed yet. Fortunately, the Department of Public Instruction has a three-year federal grant to fund work groups for the purpose of studying and making recommendations on these details. How should mentor programs be structured? What goes in the educator portfolios, and at what level of quality? What about master educator opportunities for positions not covered by the National Board certification? All of these issues are being explored.

One work group, for example, is looking at the topic of alternative licensure. The new rules speak to alternative routes to licensure. These may be provided by, but are not limited to, a college or university, school, school district, CESA, consortia, technical college, private enterprise or agency. The specifics of how this will be accomplished while continuing the requirement of high quality performances based on the Wisconsin Standards and equally rigorous preparation guarantees are part of the work group's task.

The clock is ticking on these details. The requirements for higher education go into effect on July 1, 2000 and apply for the prospective teachers entering school this fall. New teachers come under these provisions starting on July 1, 2004. The rules apply not just to new teachers, however.

Another important aspect of the new rules is that they apply to all educators, teachers and administrators alike. New principals will be granted an initial educator license and will be provided with mentors. They will have professional growth plans and work with district teams to develop and validate those plans.

The new rules truly involve a paradigm shift in the way educators will be prepared and licensed. While these rules are now in place, many challenges remain. Too few people are even aware of the implications and magnitude of the rules. Change is difficult in any institution, with many people being comfortable with the status quo. New resources may be needed, both in terms of time and funding. Imagination, the ability to think differently, will also be necessary.

These challenges can be met, however, through our shared commitment to reach the goal of providing the best possible education for the young people of this state.

ADDENDUM A - Wisconsin Standards

PI 34.02 Teacher Standards. To receive a license to teach in Wisconsin, an applicant shall complete an approved program and demonstrate proficient performance in the knowledge, skills and dispositions under all of the following standards:

- (1) The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the disciplines he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for pupils.
- (2) The teacher understands how children with broad ranges of ability learn and provides instruction that supports their intellectual, social, and personal development.
- (3) The teacher understands how pupils differ in their approaches to learning and the barriers that impede learning and can adapt instruction to meet the diverse needs of pupils, including those with disabilities and exceptionalities.
- (4) The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies, including the use of technology to encourage children's development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
- (5) The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
- (6) The teacher uses effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques as well as instructional media and technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
- (7) The teacher organizes and plans systematic instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, pupils, the community, and curriculum goals.
- (8) The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the pupil.
- (9) The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effect of his or her choices and actions on pupils, parents, professionals in the learning community and others and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
- (10) The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support pupil learning and well being and who acts with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.

SUMMARY OF PSC MEETINGS

The first meeting was organizational and informational in nature. Members were given an introduction to their duties and responsibilities including the need for filing statements with the Ethics Board prior to Senate confirmation. Members requested a clarification of the application

of the lobbying law to their PSC membership. In an April 8, 1999 letter to Deputy State Superintendent Steven Dold, Roth Judd, Director of the Ethics Board clarified that PSC members were considered "agency officials" and as such were prohibited from receiving reimbursement or items of pecuniary value from any lobbying organization.

The second meeting of the PSC was held in Madison on April 13 and 14, 1999 and included on the agenda was a plan for member interview and action by the Senate Education Committee, the first step in confirmation. The Senate Education Committee recommended all 19 members for full Senate confirmation. Full Senate approval was given on May 18, 1999 by a 30-2 vote.

The April meeting of the PSC began a focus on new rules that were well along in the development and promulgation process. Members were invited to attend DPI hearings scheduled for March 1999 and many members did attend one or more of the nine DPI hearings. Based on the information received at the hearings and a review of the text of the proposed administrative rule, the PSC focussed council efforts on the responsibility of recommending rule language to the State Superintendent. Six motions passed at the April meeting were to both support the concepts in the proposed rules and to recommend specific changes. All six changes were accepted by the State Superintendent and changes were made in the draft rules to reflect the council motions.

The PSC met next on May 12 and 13, 1999. The major concern of the council members at this meeting was with the dissemination of the substance of the administrative rules in Chapter PI 34. It was recognized that there needed to be much done to publicize the changes in the preparation and licensing structure and several motions were passed to direct the DPI to create communication structures for the purpose of sharing information about the rules and their implementation.

An in-depth consideration of the language in the new rules was planned for the June 17 and 18, 1999 meeting of the PSC. Fourteen of the 16 motions passed by the PSC dealt with concepts in the administrative rules, Chapter PI 34 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. Upon review by the State Superintendent six motions were accepted and changes made in the rules, five were accepted for further study and potential action in the future and the State Superintendent rejected three.

Since six members' terms expired effective July 1, 1999, the State Superintendent invited the nominating organizations to consider continuing the appointments of the one-year term members. All members agreed to do so, and the membership for 1999-2000 was the same as 1998-1999, except for the resignation of two members due to concerns over the implications of the lobbying law.

Based on the rejection of recommendations made at the June meeting, members of the PSC invited State Superintendent John Benson to attend the July 29, 1999 meeting. Mr. Benson thanked the members for their work in the shortened 1998-1999 year, explained his reasons for accepting some of their official actions and not others. Also at the July meeting members were provided information and materials regarding the procedures for license revocation, the National

Board for Professional Teaching Standards, a grant from Title II of the Higher Education Act awarded to the DPI, teacher testing and license reciprocity.

The September 9, 1999 meeting of the PSC was held in conjunction with a DPI- sponsored meeting of representatives from the 33 colleges and universities in Wisconsin with approved teacher preparation programs. The administrative rule language that deals with teacher testing and assessment was the main topic and representatives of two major teacher-testing companies gave presentations.

State Superintendent John Benson was invited to return to the October 27, 1999 meeting to describe the process for rule promulgation outside of the PSC official actions. Mr. Benson explained the need to negotiate with all stakeholders in the process including the Governor's office, professional associations, unions, legislative committees and other special interest groups. Mr. Benson made it clear that he will look to the PSC for advice on all licensing and preparation issues, but he would continue to reserve the right and authority to make the final decision. Action following the State Superintendents presentation at this meeting dealt with specific language recommendations for Chapter PI 34 as the document was in its final stages of preparation for legislative review.

Negotiated changes in the rules were the major agenda item for the November 10, 1999 meeting of the PSC. Of special concern were language on alternative paths to a license and the language on mentor evaluations. Because of these special concerns PSC members formally decided at that meeting to direct the Chair to testify in opposition to the rules at legislative hearings scheduled in November and December.

The meeting of the PSC on January 11 and 12, 2000 began with a conversation with Senator Richard Grobschmidt, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, Representative Luther Olsen, Chair of the Assembly Education Committee and Russ Whitesel, Legislative Counsel. The legislators affirmed the advisory role of the PSC. PSC members were challenged to be proactive in helping create change in teacher education and licensing in Wisconsin.

The PSC met February 22 and 23, 2000 with an agenda to review the development of grant work groups and to discuss the statutory responsibilities of the council. Members focussed on the direction in law to "Provide to the state superintendent an ongoing assessment of the complexities of teaching and the status of the teaching profession in this state." Members created separate lists to detail the two concepts. The members agreed that selected items from the lists would provide direction for future meeting agenda and action by the PSC.

Members of the PSC recognized the importance of the newly created rules and agreed to promote the proper dissemination and implementation of the structure in Chapter PI 34. The April 11 and 12, 2000 meeting of the PSC was spent setting priorities for future meetings to provide leadership for this implementation. The priorities selected were as follows:

- * The Council can take a very proactive role.
- * The Council can initiate dialogue and become a force for change.

* The Council can make suggestions to the state superintendent and he/she can follow through or not act on the suggestions.

There was a recognition that making the general public aware of the new rules is crucial. A list of potential action items for the future was created and the following steps were suggested for the PSC:

1. emphasize the need for public and professional awareness in the report to the legislature
2. look at people that the PSC needs to meet with to promote the rules in a very positive manner - the "we are the best" philosophy
3. invite someone from the publications/public relations area of the Department of Public Instruction to attend a future meeting and speak to the "marketing" of the rules
4. meet with parent groups and groups outside of education; begin at a grassroots level
5. take the view that education in Wisconsin is good; use the rules as a vehicle for improvement.

The meeting on May 16 and 17, 2000 was the first opportunity for the PSC to review and act on proposals for new teacher preparation programs. Presentations from the Graduate College of Wisconsin and Concordia University were heard. The PSC membership voted to approve both programs. In addition, a presentation regarding teacher testing was given, and the council members voted to express concern over the implementation of the testing requirement in PI 34.

At the meeting of June 19, 2000, the council discussed the timeline and RFP for the content exam for licensure. It was decided that a draft of the FP for the content exam would be discussed at the October meeting. Further, the PSC reviewed a draft of the annual report and decided to finalize the report in October.

APPENDICES

[List of Members](#)

Bill Hartje Speech to Milwaukee Businessmen and Educators

In his capacity as chair, Mr. Hartje was invited to address an education and business group in Milwaukee. His remarks to that assemblage summarize the work of the PSC and the view for the future work of the PSC. Those remarks are provided here in the entirety as a preamble to the annual report:

Schools in Wisconsin are good. Some are better than others are, but overall, schools are good. Students in Wisconsin are getting a good education. Some students do better than others, but overall, our students are doing well. Teachers in Wisconsin do a good job. Some teachers are better than others are, but overall, Wisconsin has good teachers.

Given this, some people may wonder why the drive for new preparation and licensing standards for educators is even necessary. Actually there are several reasons for such a major revamping of what has been done in the past.

First, no matter how well we are doing in education, we owe it to the young people of this state to strive to be better. Complacency is a prescription for falling behind. The public and educators should demand no less.

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